

The Gospel of Luke in Twelve Minutes

(Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20; 2:40; 3:21-23; 6:27-38; 17:20-21; 22:1-6; 23:27; 23:32-34; 23:44-47; 23:53-54; 24:1-7; 24:36-53)

by Don Falkos

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God sent an angel to Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, the northern province of Israel. The angel went to a young woman named Mary who was engaged but not yet married to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David.

The angel had a message for Mary, "You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You are to name him Jesus. He will be known as the Son of the Most High. God will give him the throne of his ancestor, King David. He will rule over the people of Israel forever. His kingdom will never end."

Mary asked, "How can this be? I'm not married."

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the Most High will overshadow you. Your child will be called Holy – the Son of God."

"I belong to God, body and soul. Whatever God says, I accept."

Caesar Augustus, the Roman Emperor, ordered that a census be taken of the entire Roman Empire. Everyone was required to go to his ancestral home to register. So even though Joseph was centuries removed from King David, he had to go to David's hometown of Bethlehem to be counted in the Roman census.

From Nazareth in Galilee, Joseph and his future wife, Mary, now in the later stages of her pregnancy, traveled south into Judea to Bethlehem.

Because of the Roman census there was a large number of people traveling at that time. So when Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem, any of the rooms that might normally have been available to them were already taken, and even though it was not particularly convenient, Mary's time came and she gave birth to a son. She wrapped him up and placed him in a manger.

That night, in the fields near Bethlehem, some shepherds were guarding their sheep. Suddenly, an angel appeared and glory of God was like a bright light shining all around them. The shepherds were terrified.

But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I have good news for you, and for everyone, of a wondrously joyful event. This very day in King David's hometown of Bethlehem a Savior has been born for you. He is the Anointed One, the Messiah, Christ the Lord. You will know who he is because you will find him wrapped up and lying in a manger."

The shepherds left their flocks in the fields and running to Bethlehem they found Joseph and Mary and the baby Jesus. Seeing was believing. Everything was exactly as the angel had told them it would be.

Jesus grew up filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and lived a life that was pleasing to God.

When he was about 30 years old, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. After his baptism, while Jesus was praying, the sky opened up and the Holy Spirit came down to him in the form of a dove. Then a voice came from heaven. "You are my Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with you."

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his public ministry. He traveled from place to place proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. He healed the sick; he expelled evil spirits; he performed all sorts of miracles, even raising people from the dead. Crowds gathered from near and far to hear Jesus, and people followed him wherever he went.

Once, while addressing a large crowd, Jesus said:

If you're ready to hear what I have to say, here it is: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, let them slap your other cheek too. If someone sues you for your shirt, give up your cloak as well. When people ask you for something, give it to them. If they take what's yours, let them keep it. Treat others the same way that you would want them to treat you.

If you only love those who are going to love you back, there's nothing special about that. If you're only kind to people who are kind to you, there's nothing special about that. You need to love your enemies and be kind to them. You need to give to them without expecting to be paid back. God will reward you.

Your Father in heaven is compassionate. You need to be compassionate.

Be careful not to judge or condemn others. God will treat you the same way you treat them. Instead, you ought to give generously to others. Then God will give generously to you.

On another occasion, some religious leaders, asked Jesus, "When will the Kingdom of God come?"

Jesus replied, "Don't bother looking for it. The Kingdom of God is not something you can see. The Kingdom of God is inside you."

As Jesus became more and more popular, the religious leaders became more and more concerned about the influence he was having on the people, especially once he arrived in Jerusalem. They desperately wanted to arrest Jesus, to get him out of the way. Some even wanted to kill him.

Judas Iscariot, one of his closest followers, betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders. Jesus was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death for claiming to be the Messiah, the King of the Jews.

A large crowd followed as Jesus was lead out for execution. When they came to a place called The Skull, Jesus was crucified along with two other men, both criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus prayed for his executioners, "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing."

At about midday, the sun was eclipsed, and darkness fell until about three in the afternoon. Then Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And with those words, Jesus died.

When the centurion, the Roman official in charge of the crucifixion, saw what had happened, he praised God and said, "This was certainly a good man – an innocent man."

Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in linen, and placed in a rock-hewn tomb that had never been used. This was done late on Friday afternoon.

On the third day, very early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and some other women went to the tomb, carrying spices that they had prepared to anoint the body. When they got there, they found that the stone had been rolled back from the entrance to the tomb, so they went in. But Jesus' body wasn't there.

Suddenly two angels appeared and said, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here! He has risen! Remember that while he was still in Galilee, he told you that he would be handed over to sinners who would nail him to a cross, but that on the third day he would rise again to life."

Later, Jesus' disciples, were talking about the resurrection and about Jesus appearing to some of them, when suddenly Jesus himself was standing there saying, "Peace be with you."

After convincing them that he was not a ghost, Jesus led his disciples out to the Mount of Olives. He raised his hands and blessed them. While he was still speaking, he left them and was taken up into heaven. The disciples worshiped him and went back to Jerusalem bursting with joy. They spent all of their time in the temple praising God.